

Racketeer Slain Near Brooklyn Police Station

Abe Bebhick, Wanted as Witness in Amen Inquiry, Found Shot in Parked Car

Abe Bebhick, known as Jew Murphy to the Brownsville-East New York policy crowd, was found murdered at 7:30 a. m. yesterday in a convertible sedan parked within sight of the Empire Boulevard police station in Brooklyn. He had been shot twice in the neck, just below the left ear.

In the opinion of police and of District Attorney William O'Dwyer, the Democratic candidate for Mayor, Abe Bebhick was a criminal of slight significance. But the office of Special Prosecutor John Harlan Amen, which is investigating police protection of Brooklyn gambling, ranked Bebhick among the Brownsville elite and put him on equal footing with Peaches Conte, Joe Ballerio, Primo Jordan and Louis Weber as one of the five rulers of the policy racket.

Mr. Amen's office announced that Bebhick had been wanted for more than a month as a key witness in the investigation. Harold N. Cohey, assistant to Mr. Amen, said he would seek to determine whether Bebhick had been murdered as a result of the investigation.

"Bebhick operated one of the largest policy banks in Brooklyn," Mr. Cohey said. "We have been informed he did a business of between \$7,000 and \$8,000 a day.

"We received numerous complaints from various sources and we questioned some two hundred persons, including collectors and others who worked for Bebhick. About a month ago Mr. Amen sent some policemen who are attached to this office to bring Bebhick here. They reported they could not locate him and that evidently he was in hiding."

Edward Heffernan, assistant district attorney, suggested that Bebhick's murder might be linked to recent participation in crap games in Manhattan. He learned from police that Bebhick had won between \$50,000 and \$75,000 in three games, one operating uptown, one in the midtown area and the third in the Mulberry Bend district of the lower east side.

Bebhick had welched on a \$3,000 I. O. U. after a bad night on Mulberry Bend, according to police, and had been warned to make good in a few days—or else. He paid up last week, then returned and broke the bank to the tune of \$20,000. His announcement that he intended to operate the game henceforth was not well received.

The police had two theories, first, that Bebhick had been murdered for the \$20,000 and second, that the Mulberry crowd found him insufferable and a menace to the game.

To support the robbery motive was the fact that Bebhick's trousers pockets were turned inside out and his wallet empty. However, he had a twenty-dollar bill, two ten dollar bills and a nickel in a hip pocket.

He was found slumped in the right front seat of his automobile by Leon Taub, a bakery route salesman, who summoned police. The automobile was parked in front of a six-story apartment house at 675 Empire Boulevard, three blocks from the police station.

The car was registered in the name of Theodore Fenner, a Negro garage mechanic of 140 Decatur Street. Fenner told police that he had been unable to keep up his payments on the car and had sold it to Bebhick.

Identification was established by the driver's license in Bebhick's wallet and by Detective Frank Sarcana, of the Brooklyn Homicide Squad, who recognized the dead man as one of four whom he had arrested in August, 1938, on charges of conducting a lottery. This case had dragged along until September, 1939, when Bebhick was sentenced to six months and fined \$500. That was his only conviction resulting in a jail sentence, although he previously had been arrested three times, in 1930 as a policy collector, in 1932 for violation of the Sullivan law, and in 1937 for vagrancy in Queens.

Mr. O'Dwyer admitted that he had questioned Bebhick a year ago about a series of murders by the Brownsville murder gang. He said that Bebhick recently became policy king of the Brownsville-East New York sections, the territory formerly controlled by Harry "Happy" Malone and Abe "Kid Twist" Reles, a former leader of the murder ring who has become the District Attorney's prize informer and state's witness in the current trial of Louis ("Lepke") Buchalter, one of the city's most notorious underworld characters.

Bebhick, who was thirty-eight years old, lived with his aged mother, Anna, in a frame bungalow at 9214 Avenue B, East Flatbush near the Canarsie frontier. The front lawn was a jungle of crab grass and Jimson weed. Mrs. Bebhick explained that Abe was not much of a home boy, staying away for weeks at a time. She believed he was in the restaurant business and making a good deal of money.

Around the corner, at 649 East Ninety-first Street, lived Reles. Abe grew up in the Reles mob and was finally promoted to investigator or thumbs up man because of his wide acquaintance in the district. He was the walking Dun & Bradstreet of the Brownsville rackets. Whenever Reles talked with a new prospect Bebhick would give the thumbs up gesture if the stranger's rating was O. K.

Upon Reles's retirement, Bebhick went into business for himself. Except for a few cracked skulls, his accession to power was marked by an absence of violence. Joseph Pama, former convict, was found riddled with bullets in Elberts Lane, near Sutton Avenue, last Dec. 1 but since that time the Brownsville front has been relatively quiet.

Bebhick's business office, according to police, was the curb outside a restaurant at Eastern Parkway and Utica Avenue. When last seen alive, he was standing on the curb at 2 a. m. yesterday. He had been dead less than two hours when his body was discovered five and one-half hours later.